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IN pursuing a subject already dwelt upon too long we fear for the patience of our readers, we shall be as brief as possible.

In vain shall we look for any great writers in England previous to the reign of Elizabeth. Until that period genius had either been cramped by education; narrowed by superstition, oppressed by despotism; or it had been expended on vain and frivolous subjects. Historians indeed had abounded

in every age; but not to mention that they generally wrote in Latin, they were besides but mere chronicles of naked facts; — how to reason upon these facts was not within their compass. The utmost they could do was to enter into long details of circumstances with which they were acquainted, or of which they had heard; and even these were strongly imbued with that fanaticism and credulity, which rather depicted the character of the age wherein they lived, than any thing peculiarly characteristic of the authors themselves. It is true, that in the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Mary I, talent had appeared which indicated future eminence; — but the caprice and cruelty of the first and last of these sovereigns, blasted the germ in its bud; and the short, inefficient reign of Edward, afforded it no opportunity to spring forth and acquire strength. Like the premature sprout of a mild January, it appeared, only to show its untimely beauty, & then to sink beneath the frosty, iron hand of despotic power. Under

the sanguinary sway of Mary, the apos-
tolic Ridley, and the patient Fox, used
both their pens and their tongues in the
service of truth. For this, the first seal-
ed his doctrines with his blood; and
the other barely saved his life by
escaping to Geneva. The same fate as
that which Ridley met, followed a
Cranmer, a Hooper, and a Bradford.
Yet while we regret their noble forti-
tude in suffering, we are not called to
express any sorrow for the oblivion that
has covered their writings. Like their
authors they were homely, sarcastic,
illiberal, and most unpardonably
coarse. They were the harbingers of
truth indeed, but they conveyed their
message in most uncourtly language.
We defy the patience of the most un-
yielding antiquarian to wade through
any of their productions without being
exhausted.

When Elizabeth mounted the
throne, learning left its hiding place,
and basked in the sunshine of royal
approbation; and though bound within
prescribed limits when it questioned

the prerogative, or assailed the church, it was in every other respect left free and uncontrouled. The queen, herself no mean judge of literary merit, was the great instrument of bringing it forth for public benefit. Passing over the poet Spenser, with many other writers of an inferior grade, we must briefly notice the accomplished Sydney; whose writings & whose actions bear equal testimony to the fineness of his genius, the correctness of his judgment, the brilliancy of his imagination, and the generosity of his heart;—Shakspere, whose instructive page will hand him down to posterity as the greatest master of human nature that ever existed;—& Hooker, whose powerful mind, deep learning, and uncommon industry, produced a work which must remain the text-book of the ecclesiastical politician to the end of time. Nor will the learned records of the illustrious Camden; the profound history of the world by the unfortunate Raleigh; or the more plain, but equally faithful Turkish History, by the honest Knolles, be soon forgotten.

But in the constellation of genius which burst forth under the fostering hand of Elizabeth, BACON, was the star of the first magnitude. This father of Experimental philosophy was born for all time; and as years roll on they but accumulate his fame. There are principles in his works which centuries will not developse; and when ages of investigation and discovery have been heaped upon ages, still shall remain, unfathomed, and almost unexplored, the immortal Verulam. Happy would it be, if the same exalted character could be given of the man as of his works; — but alas! this extraordinary personage, who possessed a genius & a force of mind, unrivalled in the annals of philosophy, was himself the subject of a corruption, a servility, and an ingratitude, which would have disgraced the meanest minion. But charity must cover his defects, while the hand of history does justice to his virtues and his talents.

Such were some of the men who closed the long and prosperous reign of the last of the eventful Tudors, &

who ushered in the race of the ill-starred Stuarts.

Though literature, during the greater part of the last period, may be said to have been in a middle state between barbarism and refinement, school dogmatism and philosophic reasoning; yet such had been the progress of knowledge in the closing years of Elizabeth, that when James I. united the two crowns, he found in his new acquisition a country fast improving in every science which can dignify or enrich a nation; — but it was all lost on this contemptible buffoon. Alike vain, brutish, licentious, and tyrannical, he knew not how to appreciate the characters of the extraordinary men we have mentioned. They felt their own dignity too much, either to flatter his beastly vices, applaud his absurd learning, or administer to his ungovernable lusts. The road to royal favor was therefore left open to the frothy, the flippant, and the vicious. The pious, the modest, and the unambitious, were obliged to seek refuge from his caprice & his follies, in retirement.

Yet we must do this prince the justice to say, that in one instance he accomplished a work, by which posterity are lastingly obliged; we mean the translation of the BIBLE; and whether this was done from a vain-glorious, or from a better motive, matters little to us. The benefit is not the less, because the author may have intended only to celebrate himself.

Pursuing our course through the turbulent reign of the more virtuous & accomplished, though more unfortunate Charles; and through the short and unsettled years of the Commonwealth, we shall see genius & talent assuming various appearances;—now depressed, and now exalted, in proportion as they were enlisted or opposed to the reigning power. A more heterogeneous mixture was perhaps never presented on the face of the globe,—at least, with such strong and prominent features. The partisans of the court were learned, acute, and in scholastic divinity well read; but, with few exceptions, they were cunning, dog-

matic, and overbearing. When an argument would not convince an adversary, they tried the prison, or the pillory. The last punished their temerity, and the first awed them into silence. The republicans were rough, inflexible, implacable, insulting, and in their turn not less cruel than their enemies. It would be indeed be curious to trace the progress of the innumerable political writers that burst forth in this eventful period; but it is a task from which a Hearne or a Gough, might start aside with dismay. For, not to mention their number, their very prolixity is frightful. The work of Prynne alone, written against the Bishops, contains 1000 close printed quarto pages! Nor were those of Heylen, or of Abbott, either more compressed, or less tedious. One general character however pervades the whole;- they are full of circumlocution, and every page abounding with parentheses, it is difficult to discover their meaning. Their style is harsh; their manner rough & insulting; their epithets both plentiful & vulgar; & their reasoning cloudy and ambiguous.

They have long since ceased to interest any besides the antiquarian and the political historian, and may now quietly slumber on the shelves of a library without the smallest disturbance from the generality of readers.

Making a transition, as heretofore, from the books to their authors, we shall find the resemblance pretty exact. Nursed as those men were in the cradle of contention; and in their maturity always engaged either in supporting or resisting arbitrary power, no wonder that their tempers were violent, and their language unmannerly. Refinement formed no part of their education, nor did the soft emotions of the soul find any place in their bosoms. They were made of harder materials, and fitter for more rugged employment than those of after times and happier days. Their whole glory seemed to consist in refuting, and oppressing their antagonists; nor were they very scrupulous about the means. When they had once obtained the victory, their triumph rather resembled that of the untutored barbarian, than that of the scholar, or

the Christian; and when they retired from the combat, it was not to enjoy the satisfaction of conscious integrity in silence, but to forward fresh projects for the mortification of their opponents.

We must here, however, drop the historic sketch, which would lead us far beyond our original design; and shall close our remarks in another paper, confining ourselves to individual writers for the illustration of our position. From the licentious reign of the second Charles, down to more recent times, we shall be at no loss for ample materials to answer our purpose.

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